



US Army Corps  
of Engineers

Sacramento District  
1325 J Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814-2922

# Public Notice

Public Notice Number: 199300615

Date: October 22, 2001

Comments Due: November 12, 2001

In reply, please refer to the Public Notice Number

## TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

**SUBJECT:** Application for a Department of the Army permit under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act to construct the State Route 120 Oakdale Expressway project in the Stanislaus River and several tributaries, as shown in the attached drawings.

**APPLICANT:** California Department of Transportation  
2015 E. Shields Avenue, Suite 100  
Fresno, CA 93726

**LOCATION:** The project would be located east of the City of Oakdale, along the Stanislaus River, in Stanislaus County, California (see Figure 1).

**PURPOSE:** The overall purpose of the project is to reduce the traffic congestion on State Route 120 and improve safety by reducing the number of accidents. The California Department of Transportation's (Caltrans) goals and objectives for the proposed project include reducing weekday and weekend congestion in Oakdale, minimizing environmental impacts, maximizing freeway aesthetics and minimizing construction impacts.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** Caltrans applied for a DA permit to construct an expressway from State Route 120, north of Oakdale, east to State Route 108/120.

Traffic congestion occurs on Routes 120 and 120/108 in the Oakdale vicinity during peak periods on weekdays and on weekends (especially during spring and summer holidays) due to recreational vacationers who travel to Yosemite National Park, the Jamestown and Sonora areas, and points eastward. Traffic backs up for several miles on the eastern approaches to Oakdale during major spring and summer holiday weekends. Existing Routes 120 and 120/108 do not provide adequate capacity to carry interregional traffic along with locally generated traffic in this growing city.

Caltrans would acquire the right-of-way (ROW), approximately 243 ft wide, for a future transportation facility and would construct a two-lane expressway within this ROW. Five alternative alignments are proposed for this project: 1, 2A, 2B, 2C, and 2D, ranging in length from 6.4 to 9.8 miles (see Figure 2). These alignments were developed after conducting a systematic, interdisciplinary examination of over sixty different alternatives for meeting the project's purpose and need.

In April 2001, a Draft Environmental Impact Report/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIR/S), prepared by Caltrans and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), was made available for public review and comment. The DEIR/S provides detailed information on the five alternatives alignments, including the potential environmental impacts associated with each alternative (see Table 1). Depending upon which alternative is ultimately selected, between 7 and 16 acres of wetlands and between 0.2 and 2.5 acres of other waters of the United States would be affected (see Figure 3). As compensatory mitigation for impacts, Caltrans would purchase credits from an approved wetlands mitigation bank, transfer funds to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to purchase land, and/or create and enhance riparian and herbaceous marsh wetlands.

A copy of the DEIR/S is available for review at the Corps of Engineers Sacramento District Office. The entire document can also be found on our website at [www.spk.usace.army.mil/cespk-co/regulatory](http://www.spk.usace.army.mil/cespk-co/regulatory).

**AREA DESCRIPTION:** The environmental setting is described in the DEIR/S. The project area is an interface between the Sierra Nevada foothills and the northern San Joaquin Valley. It is a transition zone between foothill plateaus and stream corridor floodplain, and does not present strong topographic relief or unusual substrates. Most of the area is dominated by annual grassland, grazed by cattle, intensive agriculture and homes, with a small amount of woodland. Aquatic resources within the project area include riparian forest associated with the Stanislaus River, herbaceous marsh, vernal pools, wet meadows, rivers, creeks, lakes, and ponds.

#### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

The latest published version of the National Register of Historic Places and its monthly supplements have been reviewed and there are no places either listed or recommended as eligible which would be affected.

The FHWA is the lead with regard to coordination under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). Depending on the final alignment chosen, FHWA will make a determination as to which species listed as endangered or threatened may be affected by the project. These species may include: valley elderberry longhorn beetle, vernal pool fairy shrimp, vernal pool tadpole Shrimp, Central Valley steelhead trout, and/or Central Valley Spring-run chinook. Formal consultation under Section 7 of the ESA will be initiated by FHWA with both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Interested parties are invited to submit written comments on or before **November 12, 2001**. Any person may request, in writing, within the comment period specified in this notice that a public hearing be held to consider this application. Requests for public hearings shall state, with particularity, the reasons for holding a public hearing.

The decision whether to issue a permit will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact including cumulative impacts of the proposed activity on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. The benefit which reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors which may be relevant to the proposal will be considered including the cumulative effects thereof; among those are conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, cultural values, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, flood plain values, land use, navigation, shoreline erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs, consideration of property ownership, and in general, the needs and welfare of the people.

The Corps of Engineers is soliciting comments from the public; Federal, state, and local agencies and officials; Indian Tribes; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of this proposed activity. Any comments received will be considered by the Corps of Engineers to determine whether to issue, modify, condition or deny a permit for this proposal. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts on endangered species, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects, and the other public interest factors listed above. Comments are used in the preparation of an Environmental Assessment and/or an Environmental Impact Statement pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. Comments are also used to determine the need for a public hearing and to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity.

If additional information is required, please contact the California Department of Transportation at (209) 941-1959, or Nancy Haley of my office at (916) 557-7772.

Michael J. Conrad, Jr.  
Colonel, Corps of Engineers  
District Engineer

Enclosures:        3 Figures  
                         1 Table